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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [GA](#)  
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: UPDATE ON PRESIDENT JAMMEH'S HEALING  
POWERS

REF: A. BANJUL 95 AND PREVIOUS  
[1](#)B. BANJUL 103

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (B AND D)

POSSIBLE EASING OF JAMMEH'S TREATMENT PROGRAM  
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[1](#)1. (C) There are signs that President Yahya Jammeh may be easing up on his personal treatment of HIV/AIDS and asthma patients (ref a). Recent days have witnessed a reduction in local media coverage of Jammeh's treatment program, which he began in mid-January. The Banjul rumor mill has it that at least one of Jammeh's HIV/AIDS patients has died and that the health of other patients undergoing Jammeh's treatment for HIV/AIDS and asthma has deteriorated due to their abandoning conventional, modern medication while under Jammeh's care. Our contacts' general view is that Jammeh's healing campaign is not likely to continue indefinitely -- especially if reports of patients' deaths reach Jammeh -- and that, in the words of one source, he may well seek to "quietly abandon" his initiative soon.

BUT NOT OVER YET  
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[1](#)2. (C) At this point, however, it would be premature to declare Jammeh's medical efforts at an end. The GOTG is continuing to solicit contributions from the public for a "trust fund" to help cover the costs of the treatment program. A well-informed journalistic source asserted that, amidst the recent expulsion of the senior resident UN official here (ref a) for challenging the effectiveness of Jammeh's program, a veteran cabinet member, Trade Minister Susan Waffa-Ogoo, has also run afoul of the President. According to our source, Waffa-Ogoo, demonstrating rare courage among GOTG officials in confronting the autocratic Jammeh, advised him to halt the treatment program. We are told that Waffa-Ogoo's unwelcome counsel was the last straw for Jammeh; already upset over complaints reaching him of her failure to assist foreign would-be investors (ref b), he ordered her immediate dismissal February 20.

COMMENT  
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[1](#)3. (C) We continue to believe that the erratic Gambian President's decision to embark on the medical treatment program stemmed first and foremost from a desire to enhance his leadership credentials with the Gambian public by demonstrating exceptional healing powers. Obviously, there is the prospect of his popular standing actually suffering in this episode, if the rumors of patients' death and deteriorating health under his care prove to be based on fact. While it is doubtful that other Gambian officials will follow Waffa-Ogoo's example and confront Jammeh over such rumors, the rumors can be expected to reach the Presidency eventually -- and perhaps lead Jammeh to halt his healing

program. END COMMENT  
STAFFORD